

Before the  
Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, DC

<b>In the Matter of</b>	)	
	)	
	)	
<b>Amendment of the Amateur Service Rules</b>	)	<b>WT Docket No. 12-283</b>
<b>Governing Qualifying Examination Systems</b>	)	
<b>and Other Matters</b>	)	
	)	
<b>Amendment of Part 97 of the</b>	)	
<b>Commission's Amateur Service Rules to</b>	)	<b>RM-11629</b>
<b>Give Permanent Credit for Examination</b>	)	
<b>Elements Passed</b>	)	

To the Commission:

Comments by Robert Randy Jenkins, KA6BQF

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important rulemaking. I have been licensed in the Amateur Service for more than 30 years, act as an instructor for all classes of license, and also serve as a Volunteer Examiner for the ARRL-VEC.

Thank you for considering my comments that follow.

Credit for Expired Licenses

A licensee who continuously renews his or her license has followed all the appropriate FCC rules. I postulate that this would indicate a cognizance of the rules, and as a result said licensee would be more likely to be familiar with and follow those rules.

A licensee who allows his license to lapse, beyond the current two year grace period, would indicate that said person lacks an active interest in amateur radio.

Granting element credit to former licensees, who have been absent from amateur radio for extended period of time, may not be in the public interest, or in the best interest of the FCC. Knowledge that is not regularly used tends to deteriorate. Thus, the skills that a former licensee once held may not present with the passage of time.

As in instructor, I have observed that former licensees, who return to amateur radio, generally have the most difficulty with the changes to the rules and regulations ( Part 97) that have transpired since their departure. They generally have little difficulty with questions involving basic electrical principals, propagation, or radio circuit theory.

The Commission asked for comments on the costs and time necessary for a licensee to regain his license by examination or by credit for previously taken elements. As proposed, someone who wanted to reinstate their expired amateur license would need to travel to, and submit an application at a VE session. This expenditure of time and effort is comparable the amount of time and effort that anyone would expend under the current rules, to obtain a license grant, by examination. Presumably, such an applicant would be charged the same processing fee as a new licensee. There might be an additional expenditure of time by an applicant who is required to take an examination, rather than be granted element credit, but for anyone who remains familiar with the material, that should not be burdensome.

Additionally, as proposed, the process adds administrative burden to the field Volunteer Examiner team. Field personnel would be required to perform an initial evaluation of the applicant's submission claiming element credit. ( One presumes that additional checks would need to be performed at the VEC and FCC levels.) Evaluation of submitted materials sometimes calls for discussion with the applicant or among the VE team, which is not compatible with the proctored quiet environment necessary for administering written examinations. Verification that an applicant is the person named on the submitted documentation may be difficult. Separating the functions for document evaluation and the functions for a proctored examination, either in time and/or location, would require either more volunteer time or more staff. Clear guidelines must be furnished to Volunteer Examiner teams, as to the documentation that would be acceptable for element credit, as well to applicants.

Should the Commission find in favor of granting examination credit to holders of expired licenses, at a minimum returning licensees should be required to pass an Element 2 examination. This would demonstrate that an applicant still possesses the minimum knowledge requirements for licensure.

#### CSCE Credit

A Certificate of Successful Completion of Examination is issued whenever a candidate passes one or more exam elements. A candidate who successfully completes the required exam elements for a license upgrade is conferred temporary operating authority for 365 days or until the Commission has acted on the candidate's application. A candidate who passes an exam element, but who lacks prerequisite element, is similarly issued a CSCE to confirm that an element has been passed, and has 365 days to complete the prerequisite element necessary for licensing or for upgrade.

Since VEC and Commission staff efficiently processes applications, it is unnecessary for the temporary

operating authority to be in effect for 365 days. 90 days should be more than adequate, except under the most unusual circumstances.

While 365 days is usually sufficient time for candidates to complete missing exam elements for licensure or upgrade, the Commission should consider extending this time to two years.

The Element 3 credit for persons who held a Technician Class license prior to 1987 should be withdrawn. Most current licensees who wanted to upgrade, have done so.

#### Grace Period

The current two year grace period is sufficient for most licensees to reinstate their license status and reclaim their assigned call sign. Two years also allows licensed family members who wish to claim a deceased licensee's call sign, or for an unlicensed family member to become licensed and claim that call sign. This period should not be reduced for the above reasons, and for the reasons cited by the Commission in previous rulemakings.

Nevertheless, the Commission should consider extending the grace period to ten years, in lieu of extending exam element credit to former licensees. This could be accomplished through the existing CORES system, without involving field Volunteer Examiners. This would reduce the costs to former licensees wishing to re-enter the Amateur Service, as well as the administrative costs to the Commission that would be incurred by allowing earlier former licensees element credit, and avoiding the administrative challenges that would be imposed on field Volunteer Examiners. I would suggest that a licensee whose license grant lapses, be allowed to reinstate their license privileges, within a ten year grace period, however, after two years, their previous call sign would be released as available under the Vanity License program, and that such former licensee would be issued the next new sequential call sign available to their license class.

#### Release of Call Signs for the Vanity Pool

Shortening the grace period, and releasing call signs to the Vanity Pool after six months, is not warranted. I would note that my father's call sign has not been reassigned despite being available for more than 35 years, nor has my great-uncle's, which has been available for more than 20 years. ( Both were Group 3 call signs. ) Catering to the demand for "desirable" call signs to be released earlier is unwarranted.

#### Number of Volunteer Examiners

I believe that it is desirable to retain the current requirement for a minimum of three VE's to be present at an examination session. This provides sufficient personnel to conduct all the functions at an examination session. More VE's are desirable at examination sessions with more candidates.

I recognize that in less populated areas, it may be difficult to recruit sufficient VE's to conduct a session, or that candidates might have to travel extended distances to available examination opportunities. The current rules permit the request of a waiver for special circumstances. In those cases, VEC's would

need to ensure that sufficient personnel would be present to effectively proctor the examination. The number of candidates at any session should be limited to numbers that can be adequately supervised by the VE's present. Perhaps, non-VE helpers could be used to assist with the proctoring function, only, much as colleges use teaching assistants to help proctor exams. Accredited VE's would still need to handle all examination materials.

#### Remote Testing

At least one VE must be present to handle examination materials. For large sessions this may result in delays to candidates as tests papers are graded, remotely. Sufficient personnel must also be present to effectively proctor any exam session. The technology is available for remote monitoring, but who would pay for it? Would candidates be required to pay a premium to be tested at a remote session?

Additional Emission Privileges – No comments.

#### Summary:

I oppose granting examination element credit to former licensees beyond the existing two year grace period. I believe that former licensees are likely unfamiliar with changes to the rules that have transpired since their licenses have expired. Should the Commission find in favor of granting examination credit to holders of expired licenses, at a minimum returning licensees should be required to pass an Element 2 examination.

CSCE's should confer Temporary Operating Authority to a candidate who successfully upgrades for a period of 90 days, or until the ULS database is updated to reflect such an upgrade. The commission should consider extending the element credit period of a CSCE to be valid for two years.

The two-year grace period for renewing an expired license should be retained. Expired call signs should not be released to the Vanity Pool before two years have elapsed. The Commission should consider extending the grace period for renewing an expired license without re-examination to ten years.

Reducing the number of Volunteer Examiners needed to administer an examination session, and authorizing remote testing would seem to generate as many issues as they solve.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert R R Jenkins